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Redevelopment Board Minutes 03/22/2010

Minutes of Monday, March 22, 2010
Approved April 12, 2010

Second Floor Conference Room, Town Hall

Members Present:
Roland Chaput
Bruce Fitzsimmons
Chris Loret, Chairman
Ed Tsui

Also Present: Carol Kowalski, Director of Planning & Community Development and several members of the public.

Mr. Loret opened the meeting and explained to members of the public that the Environmental Design Review Special Permit hearing for 990 Mass Avenue would, at the advertised time, be opened but continued to April 5 at the applicant's request, given the lack of five board members.

The Board turned its attention to the conceptual layout for the Symmes site as provided by Timber Ridge at the March 8 meeting. Two members offered sketches of alternative layouts to forward to Timber Ridge for consideration. The Board felt that the layout should provide more of a community connection, should take maximum advantage of the views, that the vista park should be seen more as a public amenity than a private backyard, and needed a focal point. Mr. Chaput commented that he had visited the Bishop's Forest condominiums in Waltham, and that if the same were developed at Symmes, the Town would be proud. The Board also commented that Timber Ridge should consider environmental sensitivity and energy-efficiency in their design and construction.

Michele Barry from the Symmes Neighborhood Advisory Committee addressed the Board saying that the neighbors are concerned about the cell tower, site drainage to prevent stormwater from going into the neighborhood, a preference for "soft" or natural edges and a landscaped rather than fenced barrier, and a desire to participate and meet with Timber Ridge. Ms. Barry added that at a point in the previous development process, neighbors were concerned that headlight and streetlight glare would affect neighbors, so a fence was considered, but neighbors later realized that glare would not be a problem.

The Board then took up the Special Permit for 990 Massachusetts Avenue, and on a motion by Mr. Chaput seconded by Mr. Fitzsimmons moved to continue the hearing until April 5 at 8pm, as requested by in writing and by electronic mail by the applicant. Approved 4-0-0.

Mr. Fitzsimmons then moved to relocate the meeting to the Selectmen's Meeting Room for their hearing on the warrant articles. Mr. Tsui seconded and all voted in favor 4-0-0.

Mr. Loret summarized the Symmes Medical Office Building (M.O.B.) Resolution for the Board of Selectmen. He explained that the resolution intends to broaden the uses prescribed under the 2004 Town Meeting resolution. Selectman Clarissa Rowe asked whether developers had proposed any other economic development use, such as a bio-tech incubator. Mr. Loret replied that it was left open, and would depend on the uses allowed by zoning. Mr. Loret commented that the medical use was a nostalgic use, and the new use should bring in new business. He added that he sensed the developer would be amenable, and that mixed use was the original intention at Symmes. Selectman Jack Hurd commented that part of the success of the debt exclusion depended on having a medical use at the site. Mr. Loret replied that if a developer showed a real expression of interest, it would be considered. Selectman Diane Mahon said she appreciated the recent opportunity to meet jointly with the Redevelopment Board on the Commercial Development study, and welcomes future such opportunities. The Town Manager asked if the Redevelopment Board would require a payment in lieu of taxes if any non-profit use was proposed for the M.O.B. or Symmes site. Mr. Loret agreed.

Bethann Friedman from the Symmes Neighborhood Advisory Committee address the Board of Selectmen saying it was important that the use serve the entire community. Assisted Living would not serve the entire community, she added. She urged the Board to maintain some control over the use of the site.

The Redevelopment Board then departed from the Selectmen's Meeting Room and returned to the Second Floor Conference Room. Ms. Kowalski remained in the Selectmen's meeting for warrant articles on which she was required to report.

The Redevelopment Board then considered the amendment to the Special Permit for 1406 Mass Ave for signage for Unleashed at 1406 Mass Ave. The Board agreed that the orange "Tuscan" colored sunbrella awning was more appropriate and closer to the approved 100% design than the dark brown. The applicant and board agreed that the rear door did not need signage and that a non-illuminated scripted awning was appropriate. Discussion ensued about the importance of keeping the windows free of advertising, view-blocking films, partitions, or barricades, and to maintain a view into the store's retail areas. The sign company representative confirmed that there was no proposal to block the windows. The Board asked that the Special permit be revisited to emphasize this condition. Mr. Fitzsimmons moved to approve the front and side elevation signage subject to the windows remaining transparent and unobstructed but to deny the proposed rear elevation signage and instead to allow a scripted, non-illuminated awning above the rear door subject to the approval of the Planning Director. The motion was seconded and approved 4-0-0.

The Board next considered its recommendations on each of the zoning bylaw amendment warrant articles. On Variance Review, article 6, the Board felt that this was not as urgent for the Zoning Board of Appeals as it had been in the past, and so Mr. Fitzsimmons moved to recommend no action. Mr. Chaput seconded and the motion was approved 4-0-0.

On the bracket sign amendment, article 7, the board made two amendments and Mr. Tsui moved to recommend the article to Town Meeting. The motion was seconded and approved 4-0-0.

On article 8, research and development, the Board amended and recommended the article on a motion by Mr. Fitzsimmons seconded by Mr. Chaput. All voted in favor 4-0-0.

On article 9, the ground-mounted solar photovoltaic article, the Board amended and recommended the article on a motion by Mr. Fitzsimmons and seconded by Mr. Chaput. All voted in favor 4-0-0.

On article 10, the fence options article, the Board amended and recommended the article on a motion by Mr. Chaput seconded by Mr. Fitzsimmons. All voted in favor 4-0-0.

The Board recommended article 11, illumination of signs, on a motion by Mr. Chaput seconded by Mr. Fitzsimmons. All voted in favor 4-0-0.

Regarding article 12, the Selectmen's article to increase the size of the Zoning Board of Appeals, the members observed that the Chairman of the ZBA was not in favor of it. Members were divided on the merits of a three-member versus 5-member board, and heard a report on the size of adjacent communities' ZBAs. The Board concluded that Town Meeting members should have a chance to consider the question and decide. Mr. Fitzsimmons moved to recommend the article, Mr. Tsui seconded and all voted in favor 4-0-0.

Ms. Kowalski would summarize the recommendations in a draft report from the Board to Town Meeting that she would provide prior to the Board's April 5 meeting.

The Board reviewed the work tracking sheet, and briefly discussed offering a draft vote to the School Committee on the Parmenter & Crosby School warrant articles based on the Town Meeting vote wording for the Gibbs School. Ms. Kowalski would prepare and send the memorandum and draft vote. Also, the preparation of a comment letter from the Board to the ZBA on the Winter Street comprehensive permit would be placed on the Work Program.

Ms. Kowalski would provide copies of the revised Board of Survey Regulations incorporating comments received during the review period. The agenda for April 5 would include an item to vote to adopt the regulations. Ms. Kowalski would also provide for the Board's information copies of a presentation on Neighborhood Road Design Guidelines prepared by the Home Builder's Association and the Mass Chapter of the American Planning Association.

Mr. Chaput moved to approve the minutes of the March 8 meeting as amended. Mr. Fitzsimmons seconded. The minutes were approved 4-0-0.

Mr. Fitzsimmons moved to adjourn at 10:40pm. The motion was seconded and approved 4-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Kowalski
Secretary ex Officio